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LETTER
TO
Mr. *M A S O N*;
ON THE
MARKS of IMITATION.

COMME *en cueillant une Guirlande*
L'homme est autant plus travaillé,
Que le Parterre est emaillé
D'une diversité plus grande :
Tant de fleurs de tant de côtes
Faisant paroître en leurs beautez
L'artifice de la Nature,
Il tient suspendu son desir,
Et ne scait en cette peinture
Ni que laisser, ni que choisir.

MALHERBE.

C A M B R I D G E.

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A

LETTER to Mr. MASON.

DEAR SIR,

I CHANC'D to say in the discourse on **POETICAL IMITATION**, "that coincidences of a certain *kind*, and in a certain *degree*, cannot fail to convict a writer of Imitation." You are sometimes curious to know what these *coincidences* are, and have thought that an attempt to point them out would furnish an useful Supplement to what I have written on this subject. You urge me too to this attempt by the promise, it seems, I made of engaging in it. But have you observ'd what I said at the same time, "That such a design would require, besides a careful examination of the workings of the human mind, an exact scrutiny of the most original and most imitative writers." ^a And, with all your par-

^a Disc. on POET. IMIT. p. 209. 2^d Ed.

ON THE MARKS

tiality for me, can you, in earnest, think me capable of fulfilling the *first* of these conditions; Or, if I were, do you imagine that, at this time o' day, I can have the leisure to perform the *other*? My younger years, indeed, have been spent in turning over those authors which young men are most fond of; and amongst these I will not disown that the Poets of ancient and modern fame have had their full share in my affection. But You, who love me so well, would not wish me to pass more of my life in these flowery regions; which tho' You may yet wander in without offence, and the rather as you wander in them with so pure a mind and to so moral a purpose, there seems no decent pretence for me to loiter in them any longer.

Yet in saying this I would not be thought to assume that severe character; which, tho' sometimes the garb of reason, is oftener, I believe, the mask of dullness, or of something worse. No, I am too sensible to the charms, nay to the uses of your profession, to affect a contempt for it. The great Roman said well, *Haec studia adolescentiam alunt; senectutem oblectant.* We make a full meal of them in our youth. And no philosophy requires so perfect a mortification as that we should wholly abstain from them in our riper years. But should we reverse the observation; and take this light food not as the refreshment only, but as the proper *nourishment* of Age; such a name, as Cicero's, I am afraid, would be wanting, and not easily found, to justify the practice.

Let

Let us own then, on a greater authority than His, “ That every thing is beautiful in it’s season.” The Spring hath it’s *buds and blossoms* : But, as the year runs on, You are not displeas’d, perhaps, to see them fall off ; And would certainly be disappointed not to find them, in due time, succeeded by those *mellow hangings*, the poet somewhere speaks of.

I could alledge still graver reasons. But I would only say, in one word, that your friend has had his share in these amusements. I may recollect with pleasure, but must never live over again

Pierisque dies, et amantes carmina somnos.

Yet something, you insist, is to be done; and, if it amount to no more than a specimen or slight sketch, such as my memory, or the few notes I have by me, would furnish, the design, you think, is not totally to be relinquished.

I understand the danger of gratifying you on these terms. Yet, whatever it be, I have no power to excuse myself from any attempt, by which, you tell me at least, I may be able to gratify you. I will do my best, then, to draw together such observations, as I have sometimes thought, in reading the poets, most material for the certain discovery of *Imitations*. And I address them to you, not only as You are the properest judge of the subject ; You, who understand so well in what manner the Poets are us’d to imitate each other, and who yourself so finely imitate the best of them ; But as I would give You this small

proof of my affection, and have perhaps the ambition of publishing to the world in this way the entire friendship, that subsists between us.

You tell me I have succeeded not amiss in explaining the difficulty of detecting *Imitations*. The materials of poetry, You own, lie so much in common amongst all writers, and the several ways of employing them are so much under the controul of common sense, that writings will in many respects be similar, where there is no thought or design of *Imitating*. I take advantage of this concession to conclude from it, That we can seldom pronounce with certainty of *Imitations* without some external proof to assist us in the discovery. You will understand me to mean by these *external proofs*, the previous knowledge we have, from considerations not respecting the *Nature* of the work itself, of the writer's *ability* or *inducements* to imitate. Our first enquiry, then, will be, concerning the *Age*, *Character*, and *Education* of the suppos'd Imitator.

We can determine with little certainty, how far the principal Greek writers have been indebted to *Imitation*. We trace the waters of Helicon no higher than to their source. And we acquiesce, with reason, in the device of the old painter, You know of, who somewhat rudely indeed, but not absurdly, drew the figure of Homer with a fountain streaming out of his mouth, and the other poets watering at it.

Hither

OF IMITATION.

7

Hither, as to their fountain, other Stars
Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.

The Greek writers then were, or for any thing
we can say, might be Original.

But we can rarely affirm this of any other. And
the reason is plain. When a taste for letters pre-
vail'd in any country, if it arose at first from the ef-
forts of original thinking, it was immediately che-
rish'd and cultivated by the study of the old writers.
You are too well acquainted with the progress of an-
tient and modern wit to doubt of this fact. Rome
adorn'd itself in the spoils of Greece. And both as-
isted in dressing up the later European poetry.
What else do You find in the Italian or French
Wits, but the old matter, work'd over again; only
presented to us in a new form, and embellish'd per-
haps with a conceit or two of mere modern inven-
tion?

But the English, You say, or rather your fondness
for Your Masters leads You to suppose, are original
thinkers. 'Tis true, Nature has taken a pleasure to
shew us what she could do, by the production of
ONE Prodigy. But the rest are what we admire
them for, not indeed without Genius, perhaps with
a larger share of it than has fallen to the lot of
others, yet directly and chiefly by the discipline of
art and the helps of Imitation.

There is however a distinction to be made. When
the fathers of the English poesy appear'd, antient li-
terature was not sufficiently known, and at another

period it was not sufficiently consider'd, to produce a strict and studied Imitation. But the *first* of these Poets, tho' You respect them for their age and for their real merits, are not your favourites. And the *other* you despise for writing so ill in their own way, when the models, they had in their hands, would have taught them to excell in a better.

To come then to the golden times of our two Queens, when the Muses, they say, went to court, and, which some may account the greater wonder, were not *debauch'd* there. Indeed the poetry of these Reigns is the noblest we have to boast of. Invention was at it's height in the *one*; and Correctness in the *other*. In *both*, the manners of a court refin'd, without either breaking or corrupting the spirit of our Poets. But do you forget that ELIZABETH read Greek and Latin almost as easily as our Professors? And can you doubt that what she knew so well, would be known, admired, and imitated by every other? or say, that the writers of her time were, some of them, ignorant enough of the *learned* languages to be inventors; can you suppose, from what you know of the fashion of that age, that their fancies would not be sprinkled, and their wits refreshed by the essences of the Italian poetry?

I scarcely need say a word of our other Queen, whose reign was unquestionably the æra of classic imitation and of classic taste. Even they, who had never been as far as Greece or Italy, to warm their imaginations or stock their memories, might do both to a tolerable degree in France; which tho' it bow'd to our

our country's arms, had almost the ascendant in point of letters.

I mention these things only to put you in mind that hardly *one* of our poets has been in a condition to do without, or certainly to be above the suspicion of learned imitation. And the observation is so true, that even in this our age, when good letters, they say, are departing from us, the Greek or Roman stamp is still visible in every work of genius, that has taken with the public. Do you think one needed to be told in the title-page, that a late DRAMA, or some later ODES were form'd on the ancient model?

The drift of all this, you will say, is to overturn the former discourse; for that now I pretend, every degree of likeness to a preceding writer is an argument of imitation. Rather, if you please, conclude that, in my opinion, every degree of likeness is exposed to the *suspicion* of imitation. To convert this suspicion into a proof, it is not enough to say, that a writer *might*, but that his circumstances make it plain or probable at least, that he *did* imitate.

Of these *circumstances* then, the *first* I should think deserving our attention, is the *AGE* in which the writer lived. One should know if it were an age addicted to much study, and in which it was creditable for the best writers to make a shew of their reading. Such especially was the age succeeding to that memorable æra, the revival of letters in these western countries. The fashion of the time was to interweave as much of antient wit as possible in every new work.

work. Writers were so far from affecting to think and speak in their own way, that it was their pride to make the admired antients think and speak for them. This humour continued very long, and in some sort even still continues ; with this difference indeed, that, then, the antients were introduced to do the honours, since to do the drudgery of the entertainment. But several causes conspired to carry it to its height in England about the beginning of the last century. You may be sure then, the writers of that period abound in imitations. The best poets boasted of them as their sovereign excellence. And you will easily credit, for instance, that B. Johnson was a servile imitator, when you find him on so many occasions little better than a painful translator.

I foresee the occasion I shall have, in the course of this letter, to weary you with citations ; and would not therefore go out of my way for them. Yet, amidst a thousand instances of this sort in Johnson, the following, I fancy, will entertain you. The Latin verses, you know, are of Catullus.

Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo convulsus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber,
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ.
Idem, quum tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ.

It came in Johnson's way, in one of his masks, to translate this passage ; and observe with what industry he

OF IMITATION.

II

He has secured the sense, while the spirit of his author escapes him.

Look, how a flower that close in closes grows,
Hid from rude cattle, bruised with no plows,
Which th'air doth stroke, sun strengthen, show'rs
shoot high'r,

It many youths, and many maids desire ;
The same, when cropt by cruel hand is wither'd,
No youths at all, no maidens have desir'd.

—It was not thus, you remember, that Ariosto and Pope have translated these fine verses. But to return to our purpose:

To this consideration of the *Age* of a writer, you may add, if you please, that of his *EDUCATION*. Tho' it might not, in general, be the fashion to affect learning, the habits acquired by a particular writer might dispose him to do so. What was less esteemed by the enthusiasts of Milton's time (of which however he himself was one of the greatest) than profane or indeed any kind of learning? Yet we, who know that his youth was spent in the study of the best writers in every language, want but little evidence to convince us that his great genius did not disdain to stoop to imitation. You assent, I dare say, to Dryden's compliment, tho' it be an invidious one, “ That no man has so copiously translated Homer's Grecisms, and the Latin elegancies of Virgil.” Nay, don't you remember, the other day, that we were half of a mind to give him up for a shameless plagiarist

plagiary, chiefly because we were sure he had been a great reader?

But no great writer, it will be said, has flourished out of a learned age, or at least without some tincture of learning. It may be so. Yet every writer is not disposed to make the most of these advantages. What if we pay some regard then to the CHARACTER of the writer? A poet, enamoured of himself, and who sets up for a great inventive genius, thinks much to profit by the sense of his predecessors, and even when he steals, takes care to dissemble his thefts and to conceal them as much as possible. You know I have instanced in such a poet in Sir *William D'Avenant*. In detecting the imitations of such a writer one must then proceed with some caution. But what if our concern be with *one*, whose modesty leads him to revere the sense and even the expression of approved authors, whose taste enables him to select the finest passages in their works, and whose judgment determines him to make a free use of them? Suppose we know all this from common fame, and even from his own confession? Would you scruple to call that an imitation in him, which in the other might have pass'd for resemblance only?

As the character is amiable, you will be pleased to hear me own, there are many of the modern poets to whom it belongs. Perhaps, the first that occurred to my thoughts was Mr. Addison. But the observation holds of others, and of *one*, in particular, very much his superior in true genius. I know not whether

ther you agree with me, that the famous line in the *Essay on man* ;

“ An honest man’s the noblest work of God,

is taken from Plato’s, Πάντων ιερώτατόν εἰς τὸν αὐθεωτός
οὐ αγαθός. But I am sure you will, that the still more famous lines, which shallow men repeat without understanding,

“ For modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight,

“ His, can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

are but copied, tho’ with vast improvement in the force and turn of expression, from the excellent, and let it be no disparagement to him to say, from the orthodox Mr. Cowley. The poet is speaking of his friend CRASHAW,

“ His Faith perhaps in some nice tenets might

“ Be wrong ; his life, I’m sure, was in the right.”

Mr. Pope who found himself in the same circumstances with Crashaw, and had suffered no doubt from the like uncharitable constructions of *graceless zeal*, was very naturally tempted to adopt this candid sentiment, and to give it the further heightening of his own spirited expression.

Let us see then how far we are got in this inquiry. We may say of the old Latin poets, that they all came out of the Greek schools. It is as true of the moderns in this part of the world, that they, in general, have had their breeding in both the Greek and Latin

Latin. But when the question is of any particular writer, how far and in what instances you may presume on his being a profess'd imitator, much will depend on the certain knowledge you have of his *Age, Education, and Character*. When all these circumstances meet in one man, as they have done in others, but in none perhaps so eminently as in B. Johnson, wherever you find an acknowledged likeness, you will do him no injustice to call it *imitation*.

Yet all this, you say, comes very much short of what you require of me. You want me to specify those peculiar considerations, and even to reduce them into rule, from which one may be authorised in any instance to pronounce of imitations. It is not enough, you pretend, to say of any passage in a celebrated poet, that it most probably was taken from some other. In your extreme jealousy for the credit of your order, you call upon me to shew the distinct marks which convict him of this commerce.

In a word, You require me to turn to the poets; to gather a number of those passages I call Imitations; and to point to the *circumstances* in each that prove them to be so. I attend you with pleasure in this amusing search. It is not material, I suppose, that we observe any strict method in our ramblings. And yet we will not wholly neglect it. You know there is one who says,

“ Il y a d’adresse à bien cueiller des Roses.

Perhaps

Perhaps then we shall find undoubted marks of Imitation, both in the SENTIMENT, and EXPRESSION of great writers.

To begin with such considerations as are most GENERAL.

I. An identity of the *subject-matter* of poetry is no sure evidence of Imitation: and least of all, perhaps, in natural description. Yet where the *local* peculiarities of nature are to be described, there an exact conformity of the matter will evince an imitation.

Descriptive poets have been ever fond of lavishing all the riches of their fancy on the *Spring*. But the appearances of this *prime of the year* are so diversified with the climate, that descriptions of it, if taken directly from nature, must needs be very different. The Greek and Latin, and since them, the Provincial poets, when they insist, as they always do, on the indulgent softness of this season, its *genial dews* and *fostering breezes*, speak nothing but what is agreeable to their own experience and feeling.

It ver; et venus; et veneris prænuntius antè
Pinnatus graditur Zephyrus vestigia propter:
Flora quibus mater præspergens antè viai
Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.

Venus, or the spirit of love, is represented by those poets as brooding o'er this delicious season;

Rura fœundat voluptas: rura VENEREM sentiunt.
Ipsa gemmas purpurantem pingit annum floribus.

“ Ipsa

*Ipsa surgentis papillas de Favonî spiritu
Urguet in toros tepentes ; ipsa roris lucidi, &c.*

and a great deal more to the same purpose, which every one recollects in the old classic and in the Provincial poets.

But when we hear this languague from the more northern, and particularly our English bards, who perhaps are shivering with the blasts of the north-east, at the very time their imagination would warm itself with these notions, one is certain this cannot be the effect of *observation*, but of a sportful fancy ; enchanted by the native loveliness of these exotic images, and charmed by the secret insensible power of *imitation*.

And to shew the certainty of this conclusion, Shakespeare, we may observe, who had none of this classical or Provincial bias on his mind, always describes, not a Greek, or Italian, or Provincial, but an English Spring ; where we meet with many unamiable characters ; and, among the rest, instead of Zephyr or Favonius, we have the bleak north-east, that *nips the blooming infants of the Spring*.

But there are other obvious examples. In Cranmer's prophetic speech, at the end of HENRY VIII, when the poet makes him say of Queen Elizabeth, that,

“ In her days ev'ry man shall eat with safety
“ Under his own vine what he plants.

and of K. James, that

————— “ He shall flourish

“ And,

“ And, like a mountain Cedar, reach his branches
 “ To all the plains about him”—

It is easy to see that his *Vine* and *Cedar* are not of English growth, but transplanted from *Judæa*. I do not mention this as an impropriety in the poet, who, for the greater solemnity of his prediction; and even from a principle of decorum, makes his *Arch-bishop* fetch his imagery from *Scripture*. I only take notice of it as a certain argument that the imagery was not his own, that is, not suggested by his own observation of nature.

The case You see, in these instances, is the same as if an English landscape-painter should choose to decorate his Scene with an Italian sky. The Connoisseur would say, he had copied this particular from *Titian* and not from *Nature*. I presume then to give it for a certain note of Imitation, *when the properties of one clime are given to another*.

II. You will draw the same conclusion whenever You find “ The Genius of one people given to an other.”

1. Plautus gives us the following true picture of the Greek manners.

— In hominum ætate multa eveniunt hujusmodi—
 Iræ intervieniunt, redeunt rursum in gratiam.
 Verùm iræ siquæ fortè eveniunt hujusmodi,
 Inter eos rursum si revertum in gratiam est,
 Bis tanto amici sunt inter se, quàm prius.

Amphyt. A. III. S. 2.

B

You

You are better acquainted with the modern Italian writers than I am; but if ever You find any of them transferring this placability of temper into an eulogy of his countrymen, conclude without hesitation, that the sentiment is taken.

2. The late Editor of Johnson's works observes very well the impropriety of leaving a trait of Italian manners in his *Ev'ry man in his humour*, when he fitted up that Play with English characters. Had the scene been laid originally in England, and that trait been given us, it had convicted the poet of *Imitation*.

3. This attention to the genius of a people will sometimes shew You, that the *form* of composition, as well as particular sentiments, comes from *Imitation*. An instance occurs to me as I am writing. The Greeks, You know, were great haranguers. So were the antient Romans, but in a less degree. One is not surpriz'd therefore that their historians abound in set speeches; which, in their hands, become the finest parts of their works. But when You find modern writers indulging in this practice of speech-making, You may guess from what source the habit is deriv'd. Would Machiavel, for instance, as little of a Scholar as, they say, he was, have adorn'd his fine history of Florence with so many harangues, if the classical bias, imperceptibly, it may be, to himself, had not hung on his mind?

Another example is remarkable. You have sometimes wonder'd how it has come to pass that the moderns

ders delight so much in *dialogue-writing*, and yet that so very few have succeeded in it. The proper answer to the first part of your enquiry will go some way towards giving you satisfaction as to the last. The practice is not original, has no foundation in the manners of modern times. It arose from the excellence of the Greek and Roman dialogues, which was the usual form in which the antients chose to deliver their sentiments on any subject.

Still another instance comes in my way. How happen'd it, one may ask, that SIR PHILIP SYDNEY in his Arcadia, and afterwards SPENSER in his Fairy Queen, observ'd so unnatural a conduct in those works ; in which the Story proceeds, as it were, by snatches, and with continual interruptions ? How was the good sense of those writers, so conversant besides in the best models of antiquity, seduc'd into this preposterous method ? The answer, no doubt, is, that they were copying the design, or disorder rather, of ARIOSTO, the favourite poet of that time.

III. Of near akin to this contrariety to the *genius of a people* is another mark which a careful reader will observe “ in the representation of certain TEMPTS, different from those which prevail in a writer's country or time.”

1. We seldom are able to fasten an imitation, with certainty, on such a writer as Shakespear. Sometimes we are, but never to so much advantage as when he happens to forget himself in this respect. When Clau-

dio, in *Measure for Measures*, pleads for his life in that famous speech,

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;
 To lye in cold obstruction, and to rot ;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed Ice ;
 To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence about
 The pendant world —

It is plain that these are not the Sentiments which any man entertain'd of *Death* in the writer's age or in that of the speaker. We see in this passage a mixture of Christian and Pagan ideas ; all of them very susceptible of poetical ornament, and conducive to the argument of the Scene ; but such as Shakespear had never dreamt of but for Virgil's Platonic hell ; where, as we read,

— aliæ panduntur inanes
 Suspensæ ad ventos : aliis sub gurgite vasto,
 Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.

Virg. L. vi.

2. A prodigiously fine passage in Milton may furnish another example of this sort.

— When Lust
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
 But

But most by lewd and lavish act of Sin,
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,
 Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
 The divine property of her first being.
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
 Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
 Ling'ring, and sitting by a new made grave,
 As loth to leave the body, that it lov'd,
 And linkt itself by carnal sensuality
 To a degenerate and degraded state.

Mask at Ludlow Castle.

This philosophy of *imbruted souls* becoming *thick shadows* is so remote from any ideas entertain'd at present of the effects of Sin, and at the same time is so agreeable to the notions of Plato (a double favourite of Milton, for his own sake, and for the sake of his being a favourite with his Italian Masters) that there is not the least question of it's being taken from the *PHAEDO*.

Ἡ τοιάυτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεται τε καὶ ἔλκεται τάλιν ἐις τὸν ὄρατὸν τόπον, Φόβῳ τῷ αἰειδεῖ τε καὶ ἄδε, τερὶ τὰ μνήματα καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδυμένη· τερὶ ἂ δὴ καὶ ὁ φθονὸς ἄττα ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ Φαντάσματα, οἵα ταρέχονται αἱ τοιάυται ψυχαὶ εἰδωλα, αἱ μὴ καθαρῶς ἀπολυθεῖσαι —

There is no wonder, now one sees the fountain Milton drew from, that, in admiration of this poetical philosophy (which nourish'd the fine spirits of that time, tho' it corrupted some) he should make the

other speaker in the Scene cry out, as in a fit of extasy,

How charming is divine philosophy !
 Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,
 And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
 Where no crude surfeit reigns —

The very ideas which Lord SHAFTESBURY has employed in his encomiums on the Platonic philosophy ; and the very language which Dr. HENRY MORE would have us'd if he had known to express himself so soberly.

3. Having said so much of Plato; whom the Italian writers have help'd to make known to us, let me just observe one thing, to our present purpose, of those Italian writers themselves. One of their peculiarities, and almost the first that strikes us, is a certain sublime mystical air which runs thro' all their fictions. We find them a sort of philosophical fanatics, indulging themselves in strange conceits "concerning the Soul, the chyming of celestial orbs, and presiding Syrens." One may tell by these marks, that they doted on the fancies of Plato ; if we had not, besides, direct evidence for this conclusion. Tasso says of himself, and he applauds the same thing in Petrarch, "Lessi già tutte l'opere di Platone, è mi rimassero molti semi nella mente della sua dottrina." I take these words from Menage, who has

much

much more to the same purpose, in his elegant observations on the *Amintas* of this poet.

One sees then where Milton had been for that imagery in the ARCADES.

then listen I
To the celestial Syrens harmony,
That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of Gods and men is wound.

The best comment on these verses is a passage in the xth Book of Plato's Republic, where this whole system, of *Syrens quiring to the fates*, is explained or rather deliver'd.

IV. We have seen a *Mark* of Imitation, in the allusion of writers to certain strange, and foreign tenets of philosophy. The observation may be extended to all those passages (which are innumerable in our poets) that allude to the *rites, customs, language and theology of Paganism*.

It is true indeed this Species of Imitation is not that which is, properly, the subject of this Letter. The most original writer is allowed to furnish himself with poetical ideas from all quarters. And the management of learned *Allusion* is to be regarded, perhaps, as one of the nicest offices of Invention. Yet it may be useful to see from what sources a great poet derives his materials; and the rather, as this detection will sometimes account for the *manner*

in which he disposes of them. However I will but detain You with a remark or two on this class of Limitations.

1. I observe that even Shakespear himself abounds in learned Allusions. How he came by them, is another question; tho' not so difficult to be answered, You know, as some have imagined. They, who are in such astonishment at the learning of Shakespear, besides that they certainly carry the notion of his illiteracy too far, forget that the Pagan imagery was familiar to all the poets of his time — that abundance of this sort of learning was to be pick'd up from almost ev'ry English book, he could take into his hands — that many of the best writers in Greek and Latin had been translated into English — that his conversation lay amongst the most learned, that is, the most paganiz'd poets of his age — but above all, that, if he had never look'd into books, or convers'd with bookish men, he might have learn'd almost all the secrets of paganism (so far, I mean, as a poet had any use of them) from the MASKS of B. Johnson; contriv'd by that poet with so pedantical an exactness, that one is ready to take them for lectures and illustrations on the antient learning, rather than exercises of modern wit. The taste of the age, much devoted to erudition, and still more, the taste of the Princes, for whom he writ, gave a prodigious vogue to these unnatural exhibitions. And the knowledge of antiquity, requisite to succeed in them, was, I imagine, the reason that Shakespear was

not

not over fond to try his hand at these elaborate trifles. Once indeed he *did*, and with such success as to disgrace the very best things of this kind we find in Johnson. The short Mask in the *Tempest* is fitted up with a classical exactness. But it's chief merit lies in the beauty of the *Shew*, and the richness of the *poetry*. Shakespear was so sensible of his Superiority, that he could not help exulting a little upon it, where he makes *Ferdinand* say,

This is a most majestic *Vision*, and
Harmonious charming *Lays* —

’Tis true, another Poet, who possess'd a great part of Shakespear's Genius and all Johnson's learning has carried this courtly entertainment to it's last perfection. But the *Mask at Ludlow Castle* was, in some measure, owing to the *fairy Scenes* of his Predecessor; who chose this province of *Tradition*, not only as most suitable to the wildness of his vast creative imagination, but as the *safest* for his unlettered Muse to walk in. For here he had much, You know, to expect from the popular credulity, and nothing to fear from the classic superstition of that time.

2. It were endless to apply this *note* of imitation to other poets confessedly learned. Yet one instance is curious enough to be just mention'd.

Mr. Waller, in his famous poem on the victory over the Dutch on June 3. 1665. has the following lines;

His

His flight tow'rs heav'n th' aspiring BELGIAN
took;

But fell, like PHAETON, with thunder strook :
From vaster hopes than his, he seem'd to fall,
That durst attempt the BRITISH Admiral :
From her broadsides a ruder flame is thrown,
Than from the fiery chariot of the Sun :
THAT, bears the RADIANT ENSIGN OF THE
DAY ;

And SHE, the flag that governs in the Sea.

He is comparing the British Admiral's *Ship* to the *Chariot* of the Sun. You smile at the quaintness of the conceit, and the ridicule he falls into, in explaining it. But that is not the question at present. The *Later*, he says, bears *the radiant ensign of the day*. The *other*, *the ensign of naval dominion*. We understand how properly the *English Flag* is here denominated. But what is that *other Ensign*? The *Sun* itself, it will be said. But who in our days, ever express'd the *Sun* by such a periphrasis? The image is apparently antique, and easily explain'd by those who know that antiently the *Sun* was commonly emblematis'd by a *starry or radiate figure*; nay, that such a figure was plac'd aloft, as an *Ensign*, over the *Sun's charioteer*, as we may see in representations of this sort on antient Gems and Medals.

From this original then Mr. Waller's imagery was certain taken ; and it is properly applied in this place where he is speaking of the *Chariot of the Sun*, and *Phaeton's fall* from it. But to remove all doubt

in the case, we can even point to the very passage of a Pagan poet, which Mr. Waller had in his eye, or rather translated.

Propterea noctes hiberno tempore longæ
Cessant, dum veniat RADIATUM INSIGNE DIEL.
Lucr. L. v. 698.

Here, you see, the poet's allusion to a classic idea has led us to the discovery of the very passage from which it was taken. And this use a learned reader will often make of the species of Imitation, here consider'd.

V. Great writers, You find, sometimes forget the character of the *Age*, they live in; the *principles*, and *notions* that belong to it. "Sometimes they forget themselves, that is, their own situation and character." Another sign of the influence of *Imitation*.

I. When we see such men, as STRADA and MARIANA, writers of fine talents indeed, but of recluse lives and narrow observation, chusing to talk like men of the world, and abounding in the most refin'd conclusions of the cabinet, we are sure that this character, which we find so natural in a Cardinal DE RETZ, is but assum'd by these Jesuits. And we are not surpriz'd to discover, on examination, that their best reflexions are copied from TACITUS.

On the other hand, when a man of the world took it into his head, the other day, in a moping fit, to talk *Sentences*, every body concluded that this was not

the

the language of the writer or his situation, but that he had been poaching in some pedant; perhaps in the *Stoical Fop*, he affected so much contempt of, *SENeca*.

2. Sometimes we catch a great writer deviating from his *natural manner*, and taking pains, as it were, to appear the very reverse of his proper *character*. Would you wish a stronger proof of his being seduc'd, at least for the time, by the charms of *imitation*?

Nothing is better known than the easy, elegant, agreeable vein of *VOITURE*. Yet you have read his famous Letter to *BALZAC*, and have been surpriz'd, no doubt, at the forc'd, quaint, and puffy manner, in which it is written. The secret is, Voiture is aping Balzac from one end of this letter to the other. Whether to pay his court to him, or to laugh at him, or that perhaps, in the instant of writing, he really fancied an excellence in the style of that great man, is not easy to determine. An eminent French critic, I remember, is inclined to take it for a piece of mockery. At all events, we must needs esteem it an *imitation*.

3. This remark on the turn of a writer's *genius* may be further applied to that of his *temper* or *disposition*.

The natural misanthropy of *Swift* may account for his thinking and speaking very often in the spirit of *ROCHFOUCAULT*, without any thought of taking from his *Maxims*, tho' he was an admirer of them.

But

But if at any time we observe so humane and benevolent a man as Mr. Pope giving into this language, we say of course, "This is not his own, but an assumed manner."

Or what say you to an instance that exemplifies both these observations together? The natural unaffected turn of Mr. Cowley's manner, and the tender sensibility of his mind, are equally seen and loved in his prose-works, and in such of his poems as were written after a good model, or came from the heart. A clear sparkling fancy, softened with a shade of melancholly, made him, perhaps, of all our poets the most capable of excelling in the elegiac way, or of touching us in any way where a vein of easy language and moral sentiment is required. Who but laments then to see this fine genius perverted by the prevailing pedantry of his age, and carried away, against the bias of his nature, to an emulation of the rapturous, high-spirited Pindar?

I might give many more examples. But you will observe them in your own reading. I take the first that come to hand only to explain my meaning, which is, "That if you find a course of sentiments or cast of composition different from that, to which the writer's *situation, genius, or complexion* would naturally lead him, you may well suspect him of imitation.

Still it may be, these considerations are rather too general. I come to others more particular and decisive.

VI. It may be difficult sometimes to determine whether a single sentiment or image be derived or not. But when we see a cluster of them in two writers, applied to the same subject, one can hardly doubt that one of them has copied from the other.

A celebrated French moralist makes the following reflections. "Quelle chimère est-*ce* donc que l'homme? " "Quelle nouveauté, quel cahos, quel sujet de con- " "tradiction? Juge de toutes choses, imbecile ver de " "terre; depositaire du vrai, amas d'incertitude; " " gloire, et rebut de l'univers."

Turn now to the *Essay on Man*, and tell me if Mr. Pope did not work up the following lines out of these reflexions.

" Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
" Still by himself abus'd or disabus'd;
" Created half to rise, and half to fall,
" Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
" Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
" The glory, jest, and riddle of the world."

2. This conclusion is still more certain, when, together with a general likeness of sentiments, we find the same *disposition* of the parts, especially if that disposition be in no common form.

" Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet
" With charm of earliest birds: pleasant the sun,
" When first on this delightful land he spreads
" His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r,
" Glistring with dew—

and

and the rest of that fine speech in the IVth Book of *Paradise lost*, which you remember so perfectly that I need not transcribe more of it.

Milton's fancy, as usual, is rich and exuberant; but the conduct and application of his imagery shews, that the whole passage was shadowed out of those charming but simpler lines in the *DANAË* of Euripides.

————— φίλον μὲν Φέγυρος πλίθις τόδε.

Καλὸν δὲ τόνις χένυμ' ἴδειν ἐυπνεμον.

Γῆ τ' ἡρινὸν Θάλλασσα, ταλάσσιον Θύμωρ,

Πολλῶν τ' ἔπαινον ἔστι μοι λέξαις καλῶν.

Ἄλλ' ὃδεν οἴω λαμπρὸν, ὃδ' ἴδειν, καλὸν,

Ως τοῖς ἀπαισι, καὶ τόθω δεδηγμένοις,

Πάιδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἴδειν Φάσος.

VII. There is little doubt in such cases as these. There need not perhaps be much in the case, sometimes, of *single* sentiments or images. As where we find "a sentiment or image in two writers precisely "the same, yet new and unusual."

1. Thus we are told very reasonably, that *Milton's clust'ring locks* is the copy of Apollonius' ΠΛΟΧΜΟΙ ΒΟΤΡΥΟΕΝΤΕΣ. *Obs. on Spencer*, p. 80. For tho' the metaphor be a just one and very natural, yet there is perhaps no other authority for the use of it, but in these two poets. And Milton had certainly read Apollonius.

2. What

2. What the same critic observes of Milton's *Paradise Lost*—“And curl the grove
“In ringlets quaint”—
being taken from Johnson's,
“When was old Sherwood's head more quaintly
curl'd?

is still more unquestionable. For here is a combination of signs to convict the former of imitation: Not only the *singularity of the image*, but the *identity of expression*, and, what I lay the most stress upon, the *boldness of the figure*, as employed by Milton. Johnson speaks of old Sherwood's *head*, as curl'd. Milton, as conscious of his authority, drops the preparatory idea, and says at once, The *grove* curl'd.

Let me add to these, two more instances from the same poet.

3. Spenser tells us of,

“A little glooming light, much like a shade.

F. Q. C. II. s. 14.

Can you imagine that Milton did not take his idea from hence, when he said, in his *Penserofo*,

—glowing embers thro' the room

Teach light to counterfeit a gloom?

4. Again, in his description of Paradise,

“Flow'rs of all hues, and without thorn the rose.

Every

Every poet of every time is lavish of his flowers on such occasions. But *the rose without thorn* is a rarity. And, tho' it was fine to imagine such an one in Paradise, could only be an Italian refinement. Tasso, you will think, is the original, when you have read the following lines;

Senza quei suoi pungenti ispidi dumi
Spiegò le foglie la purpurea Rosa.

5. Another instance, still more remarkable, may be taken from Mr. Pope. One of the most striking passages in the *Essay on Man* is the following,

Superior Beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a NEWTON, as we shew an ape.

Ep. ii. §. 31.

Can you doubt, from the *singularity* of this sentiment, that the great poet had his eye on Plato? who makes Socrates say, in allusion to a remark of Heraclitus, "Οτι αιθρώπων ο σοφώτατος ὡρὸς θεόν τιθμός Φανεῖται." Hipp. Major.

The application indeed is different. And it could not be otherwise. For the observation, which the Philosopher refers ὡρὸς θεόν, is in the Poet given to *superior Beings* only. The consequence is, that the *Ape* is an object of *derision* in the former case, of *admiration*, in the latter.

To conclude this head, I will just observe to you, that, tho' the *same uncommon sentiment* in two *writers* be usually the effect of imitation, yet we cannot affirm this of *Actors* in real life. The reason is, when the situation of two men is the same, *Nature* will dictate the same sentiments more invariably than *Genius*. To give a remarkable instance of what I mean.

Tacitus relates, in the *first* book of his *Annals*, what passed in the senate on its *first* meeting after the death of *Augustus*. His politic successor carried it, for some time, with much apparent moderation. He wished, besides other reasons, to get himself solemnly recognized for *Emperor* by that Body, before he entered on the exercise of his new dignity. *Dabat famæ*, says the historian, *ut vocatus electusque potius a Republicâ videretur, quam per uxorium ambitum et senili adoptione irrepisse*. One of his courtiers would not be wanting to himself on such an occasion. When therefore several motions had been made in the *Senate*, concerning the honours to be paid to the memory of their late *Prince*, **MESSALLA VALERIUS** moved, **RENOVANDUM PER ANNOS SACRAMENTUM IN NOMEN TIBERII**; in other words, that the oath of allegiance should be taken to *Tiberius*. This was the very point that *Tiberius* drove at. And the consciousness of it made him suspect that this motion might be thought to proceed from himself. He therefore ask'd *Messalla*, “*Num, se mandante, eam sententiam promisisset?*” His answer is in the following words. “*Spontè dixisse, respondit; neque in iis, quæ ad rem*

*“ publicam pertinerent, consilio nisi suo usurum, vel
“ cum periculo offensionis.” Ea, concludes the histo-
rian, sola species adulandi supererat.*

Now it is very remarkable, that we find, in Ludlow's memoirs, one of Cromwell's officers, on the very same occasion answering the Protector in the very same species of flattery.

Colonel WILLIAM JEPHSON moved in the House, that Cromwell might be made King. Cromwell took occasion, soon after, to reprove the Colonel for this proposition, telling him, that he wonder'd what he could mean by it. To which the other replied, *“ That while he was permitted the honour of sitting in that House, he must desire the liberty to discharge his conscience, though his opinion should happen to displease.*

Here we have a very striking coincidence of sentiment, without the least probability of imitation. For no body, I dare say, suspects Colonel William Jephson of stealing this refined stroke of adulation from Messalla Valerius. The truth is, the same situation, concurring with the same corrupt disposition, dictated this peculiar sentiment to the two courtiers. Yet, had these similar thoughts been found in two dramatic poets of the Augustan and Oliverian Ages, we should probably have cried out, *“ An Imitation.”* And with good reason. For, besides the possibility of an Oliverian poet's knowing something of Tacitus, the speakers had then been *feigned*, not real personages. And it is not so likely that two such should agree in this sentiment: I mean, considering how new and

particular it is. For, as to the more common and obvious sentiments, even dramatic speakers will very frequently employ the *same*, without affording any just reason to conclude that their prompters had turned plagiaries.

VIII. If to this singularity of a sentiment, you add the *apparent harshness* of it, especially when not gradually *prepar'd* (as such sentiments always will be by exact writers, when of their own proper invention) the suspicion grows still stronger. I just glanc'd at an instance of this sort in Milton's *curl'd* grove. But there are others still more remarkable. Shall I presume for once to take an instance from yourself?

Your fine Ode to Memory begins with these very lyrical verses :

Mother of Wisdom ! Thou whose sway
 The throng'd ideal hosts obey ;
 Who bidst their ranks now vanish, now appear,
 Flame in the van, and darken in the rear.

This sublime imagery has a very original air. Yet I, who know how familiar the best antient and modern critics are to you, have no doubt that it is taken from STRADA.

“ Quid accommodatius, says he, speaking of your subject, Memory, quām simulachrorum ingentes copias, tanquām addictam ubique tibi sacramento militiam, eo inter se nexu ac fide conjunctam cohærentemque habere ; ut five unumquodque separatim, five confertim universa, five singula ordinatim *in aciem preferre* velis ;

lis; nihil planè in tantâ rerum turbâ turbetur, sed alia procùl atque in recessu sita prodeuntibus locum cedant; alia, se tota confestim promant atque in medium certò evocata profilant? Hoc tam magno, tam fido domesticorum agmine instructus animus, &c."

Prol. Acad. I.

Common writers know little of the art of *preparing* their ideas, or believe the very name of an Ode absolves them from the care of art. But, if this uncommon sentiment had been intirely your own, you, I imagine, would have dropp'd some *leading* idea to introduce it.

IX. You see with what a suspicious eye, we who aspire to the name of critics, examine your writings. But every poet will not endure to be scrutiniz'd so narrowly.

I. B. Johnson, in his Prologue to the *Sad Shepherd*, is opening the subject of that poem. The *sadness* of his shepherd is

For his lost Love, who in the T R E N T is said
To have miscarried; 'las! what knows the head
Of a calm river, whom the feet have drown'd!

The reflexion in this place is unnecessary and even impertinent. Who besides ever heard of the *feet* of a river? Of *arms*, we have. And so it stood in Johnson's original.

Greatest and Fairest Empress, know you this,
Alas! no more than Thames' calm head doth know
Whose meads his arms drown, or whose corn o'er-
flow.

Dr. DONNE.

The poet is speaking of the corruption of the courts of justice, and the allusion is perfectly fine and natural. Johnson was tempted to bring it into his prologue by the mere beauty of the sentiment. He had a river at his disposal, and would not let slip the opportunity. But “ his unnatural use of it detects his ‘ imitation.’ ”

2. I don't know whether you have taken notice of a miscarriage, something like this, in the most judicious of all the poets.

Theocritus make Polypheme say,

Καὶ γὰρ θὴν ψόδον ἔχω κακὸν, ὡς με λέγουσί,
“Η γὰρ πρᾶν ἐσ Πόνιον ἐσέβλεπον, οὐδὲ γαλάνα.

Nothing could be better fancied than to make this enormous son of Neptune use the sea for his looking-glass. But is Virgil so happy when his little land-man says,

Nec sum adèo informis : nuper me in littore vidi,
Cùm placidum ventis staret *mare* —

His wonderful judgment for once deserted him, or he might have retain'd the sentiment with a slight change in the application. For instance, what if he had said,

Certè ego me novi, liquidæque in imagine vidi
Nuper aquæ, placuitque mihi mea forma videnti.

It is a sort of curiosity, you say, to find Ovid reading a lesson to Virgil. I will dissemble nothing. The lines

lines are, as I have cited them, in the 13th book of the metamorphosis. But unluckily they are put into the mouth of Polypheme. So that instead of instructing one poet by the other, I only propose that they should make an exchange; Ovid take Virgil's *sea*, and Virgil be contented with Ovid's *water*. However this be, you may be sure the authority of the Prince of the Latin poets will carry it with admiring posterity above all such scruples of decorum. No body wonders therefore to read in Tasso,

Non son' io
 Da disprezzar, se ben me stesso vidi
 Nel liquido del mar, quando l'altr' hieri
 Taceano i venti, et ei giacea senz' onda.

But of all the misappliers of this fine original sentiment, commend me to that *other* Italian, who made his shepherd survey himself, in a *fountain* indeed, but a fountain of his own weeping.

3. You will forgive my adding one other instance “ of this vicious application of a fine thought.”

You remember those agreeable verses of Sir John Suckling,

“ Tempests of winds thus (as my storms of grief
 Carry my tears which should relieve my heart)
 Have hurried to the thankless ocean clouds
 And show'rs, that needed not at all the courtesy,
 When the poor plains have languish'd for the want,
 And almost burnt asunder” —

Brennoralt. A. III. S. I.

I don't stay to examine how far the fancy of *tears relieving the heart* is allowable. But admitting the propriety of the observation, in the sense the poet intended it, the simile is applied and expressed with the utmost beauty. It accordingly struck the best writers of that time. SPRAT, in his history of the *Royal Society*, is taking notice of the misapplication of philosophy to subjects of Religion. " That shower, says " he, has done very much injury by falling on the " sea, for which the shepherd, and the ploughman, " call'd in vain: The wit of men has been profusely " pour'd out on *Religion*, which needed not its help, " and which was only thereby made more tempestuous: while it might have been more fruitfully " spent, on some parts of *philosophy*, which have been " hitherto barren, and might soon have been made " fertil." p. 25.

You see what wire-drawing here is to make the comparison, so proper in its original use, just and pertinent to a subject to which it had naturally no relation. Besides, there is an absurdity in speaking of a shower's doing *injury* to the sea by falling into it. But the thing illustrated by this comparison requiring the idea of *injury*, he transfers the idea to the comparing thing. He would soften the absurdity, by running the comparison into metaphorical expression, but, I think, it does not remove it. In short, for these reasons, one might easily have infer'd an Imitation, without that parenthesis to apologize for it — " To use that metaphor which an excellent " poet of our nation turns to *another purpose* — "

But

But a poet of that time has no better success in the management of this metaphor, than the Historian.

LOVE makes so many hearts the prize
 Of the bright CARLISLE's conqu'ring eyes;
 Which she regards no more, than they
 The tears of lesser beauties weigh,
 So have I seen the lost clouds pour
 Into the Sea an useless show'r;
 And the vex'd Sailors curse the rain,
 For which poor Shepherds pray'd in vain.

Waller's Poems, p. 25.

The Sentiment stands thus, “ She regards the “ captive hearts of others no more than those others “ — the *tears* of lesser beauties.” Thus, with much difficulty, we get to *tears*. And when we have them the allusion to *lost clouds* is so strain'd, (besides that he makes his showers both *useless* and *injurious*) that one readily perceives the poet's thought was distorted by *imitation*.

X. The charge of Plagiarism is so disreputable to a great writer that one is not surpriz'd to find him anxious to avoid the imputation of it. Yet “ this “ very anxiety serves sometimes, to fix it upon “ him.”

Mr. Dryden, in the Preface to his translation of Fresnoy's Art of painting, makes the following observation on Virgil. ” He pretends sometimes to “ trip, but 'tis only to make you think him in dan-
 “ ger

“ ger of a fall when he is most secure. Like a skill-
 “ ful dancer on the Rope (if You will pardon the
 “ meanness of the similitude) who slips willingly
 “ and makes a seeming stumble, that You may think
 “ him in great hazard of breaking his neck; while
 “ at the same time he is only giving You a proof of
 “ his dexterity. My late Lord Roscommon was of-
 “ ten pleas'd with this reflection, &c.” p. 50.

His apology for the use of this simile, and his concluding with Lord Roscommon's satisfaction at his remark, betray, I think, an anxiety to pass for original, under the consciousness of being but an imitator. So that if we were to meet with a passage, very like this, in a celebrated antient, we could hardly doubt of it's being copied by Mr. Dryden. What think you then of this observation in one of Pliny's Letters, “ Ut quasdam artes, ita eloquentiam nihil
 “ magis quam ancipitia commendant. Vides qui fune
 “ in summa nituntur, quantos soleant excitare cla-
 “ mores, cum jam jamque casuri videntur.” *L. ix.*
Ep. 26.

PRIOR, one may observe, has acted more naturally in his *Alma*, and by so doing, tho' the resemblance be full as great, one is not so certain of his being an Imitator. The verses are, of BUTLER.

He perfect Dancer climbs the Rope,
 And balances your fear and hope:
 If after some distinguish'd leap,
 He drops his Pole and seems to slip;

Straight

Straight gath'ring all his active strength
 He rises higher half his length.
 With *wonder* You approve his flight
 And owe your pleasure to your *fright*.

C. II.

Tho' the two last lines seem taken from the application of this similitude in Pliny, "Sunt enim maxime mirabilia, quae maximè inexpectata, et maxime periculosa."

XI. Writers are, sometimes, solicitous to conceal themselves: At others, they are fond to proclaim their Imitation. "It is when they have a mind to shew their dexterity in contending with a great original."

You remember these lines of Milton in his *Comus*,

Wisdom's self

Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude,
 Where with her best nurse, contemplation,
 She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
 That in the various bustle of resort
 Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.

On which Dr. Warburton has the following note.

"Mr. Pope has imitated this thought and (as was always his way when he imitated) improved it."

Bear me, some Gods! oh, quickly bear me hence
 To wholesome Solitude, the nurse of Sense;
 Where Contemplation prunes her ruffled wings,
 And the free Soul looks down to pity Kings.

Mr.

ON THE MARKS

“ Mr. Pope has not only improved the harmony, but
“ the sense. In Milton, *Contemplation* is called the
“ *Nurse*; in Pope, more properly *Solitude*: In Mil-
“ ton, *Wisdom* is said to *prune her wings*; in Pope,
“ *Contemplation* is said to do it, and with much great-
“ er propriety, as she is of a *soaring* nature, and on
“ that account is called by Milton himself, the *Che-
“ rub Contemplation.*”

One sees that Mr. Pope's view was to surpass his original; “ which, it is said, was always his way “ when he imitated.” The meaning is, when he purposely and professedly bent himself to Imitation; for then his fine genius taught him to seize every beauty, and his wonderful judgment, to avoid ev'ry defect or impropriety, in his author. And this distinction is very material to our passing a right judgment on the merit of Imitators. It is commonly said, that their imitations fall short of their originals. And they will do so, whatever the Genius of the Imitator be, if they are formed only on a *general* resemblance of the thought imitated. For an Inventor comprehends his own idea more distinctly and fully, and of course expresses his purpose better, than a casual Imitator. But the case is different, when a good writer *studies* the passages from which he borrows. For then he not only copies, but improves on the first idea; and thus there will frequently (as in the case of Pope) be greater merit in the Copyist, than the original.

XII. We sometimes catch an Imitation lurking “ in a licentious Paraphrase.” The ground of Suspicion

picion lies in the very complacency with which a writer expatiates on a borrow'd sentiment. He is usually more reserv'd in adorning one of his own.

I. AURELIUS VICTOR observes of Fabricius,
 "quod difficilius ab honestate, quam Sol a suo cursu,
 " averti posset."

Tasso flourishes a little on this thought;

Prima dal corso distornar la Luna
 E le stelle potrà, che dal diritto
 Torcere un sol mio passo —

Cx. S. 24.

Mr. Waller rises upon the Italian,

— " where her love was due,
 So fast, so faithful, loyal, and so true,
 That a bold hand as soon might hope to force
 The rowling lights of heav'n, as change her
 course." *On the Death of Lady RICH.*

But Mr. COWLEY, knowing what authority he had for the general sentiment, gives the reins to his fancy and wantons upon it without measure.

Virtue was thy life's centre, and from thence
 Did silently and constantly dispense

The gentle vigorous influence
 To all the wide and fair circumference:
 And all the parts upon it lean'd so easilie,
 Obey'd the mighty force so willinglie,
 That none could discord or disorder see
 In all their contrarietie.

Each

Each had his motion natural and free
 And the whole no more mov'd, than the whole world
 could be.

BRUTUS.

2. The ingenious author of the *Observations on Spenser* (from which fine specimen of his critical talents one is led to expect great things) directs us to another imitation of this sort.

Tasso had said,

Cosi a le belle lagrime le piume
 Si bagna Amore, e gode al chiaro lume.

On which short hint Spenser has rais'd the following luxuriant imagery,

The blinded archer-boy,
 Like lark in show'r of rain,
 Sate bathing of his wings,
 And glad the time did spend
 Under those chrystral drops,
 Which fall from her fair eyes,
 And at their brightest beams
 Him proyn'd in lovely wise.

3. I will just add two more examples of the same kind; chiefly, because they illustrate an observation, very proper to be attended to on this subject; which is, " That in this display of a borrowed thought, " the Imitation will generally fall short of the Original, even tho' the borrower be the greater Genius."

The

Moon were in the flat sea sunk. It may be ask'd, how this happen'd? Very naturally. Milton was caught with the obvious *imagery*, which he found he could display to more advantage; and so did not enough attend to the noble *sentiment* that was couched under it.

XIII. These are instances of a paraphrastical licence in dilating on a famous Sentiment or Image. The *ground* is the same, only flourish'd upon by the genius of the Imitator. At times we find him practising a different art; "not merely spreading, as it "were, and laying open the same sentiment, but "adding to it and by a new and studied device im- "proving upon it." In this case we naturally conclude that the refinement had not been made, if the plain and simple thought had not preceded and given rise to it.. You will apprehend my meaning by what follows.

I. Shakespear had said of Henry ivth.

— He cannot long hold out these pangs;
The incessant care and labour of his mind
Hath wrought the mure, that should confine it in,
So thin, that life looks through, and will break out.

Hen. iv. A. 4.

You have, here the thought in it's first Simplicity. It was not unnatural, after speaking of the body, as a case or tenement of the Soul, *the mure that confines it*, to say, that as that case wears away and grows thin, life looks thro', and is ready to break out.

D

DANIEL,

DANIEL, by refining on this sentiment, if by nothing else, shews himself to be the copyist. Speaking of the same Henry, he observes,

And Pain and Grief, inforging more and more,
Besieg'd the hold that could not long defend ;
Consuming so all the resisting store
Of those provisions Nature deign'd to lend,
As that the Walls, worn thin, permit the mind
To look out thorough, and his frailty find.

Here we see, not simply that *Life* is going to break thro' the infirm and much worn habitation, but that the *Mind* looks thro' and *finds* his frailty, that it discovers, that *Life* will soon make his escape. I might add, that the four first lines are of the nature of the *Paraphrase*, consider'd in the last article: And that the *expression* of the others is too much the same to be original. But we are not yet come to the head of *expression*. And I choose to confine myself to the single point of view we have before us.

Daniel's improvement, then, looks like the artifice of a man that would outdo his Master. Tho' he fails in the attempt. For his ingenuity betrays him into a false thought. The mind, looking thro', does not find *it's own frailty*, but the frailty of the *building* it inhabits. However I have endeavoured to rectify this mistake in my explanation.

The truth is, Daniel was not a man to improve upon Shakespear. But now comes a writer, that knew his business much better. He chuses to em-

ploy

ploy this well-worn image, or rather to alter it a little and then employ it, for the conveyance of a very new fancy. If the mind could look thro' a *thin* body, much more one that was *crack'd* and *batter'd*. And if it be for looking thro' at all, he will have it look to good purpose, and find, not it's frailty only, but much other useful knowledge.

The lines are Mr. Waller's, and in the best manner of that very *refined* writer.

Stronger by weakness, wiser, men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
The Soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made.

2. After all, these conceits, I doubt, are not much to your taste. The instance I am going to give, will afford you more pleasure. Is there a passage in Milton You read with more admiration, than this in the *Penserofo*?

Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep ;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream ;
Of lively portraiture display'd
Softly on my eye-lids laid.

Would You think it possible now that the ground-work of this fine imagery should be laid in a passage of Ben Johnson? Yet so we read, or seem to read in his *Vision of Delight*.

Break, Phant'sy, from thy *cave of cloud*,
And spread thy purple wings :
Create of airy forms a stream,
And tho' it be a waking dream,
Yet let it like an odour rise
To all the senses here
And fall like sleep upon their eyes
Or musick in their ear.

It is a delicate matter to analyze such passages as these ; which, how exquisite soever in the poetry, when estimated by the *fine phrenzy* of a Genius, hardly look like sense when given in plain prose. But if You give me leave to take them in pieces, I will do it, at least, with reverence. We find then, that *Fancy* is here employ'd in one of her nicest operations, the production of a *day-dream* ; which both poets represent as an *airy form*, or forms *streaming* in the air, gently falling on the eye-lids of her entranc'd votary. So far their imagery agrees. But now comes the *mark* of imitation I would point out to you. Milton carries the idea still farther, and improves finely upon it, in the *conception* as well as expression. Johnson evokes fancy out of her *cave of cloud*, those cells of the mind, as it were, in which during her intervals of rest, and when unemploy'd, fancy lies hid ; and bids her, like a Magician, *create* this stream of forms. All this is just and truly poetical. But Milton goes further. He employs the *dewy-feather'd sleep* as his Minister in this machinery. And the myste-

mysterious day-dream is seen *waving at his wings in airy stream*. Johnson would have Fancy immediately produce this Dream. Milton more poetically, because in more distinct and particular imagery, represents Fancy as doing her work by means of *sleep*; that soft composure of the mind abstracted from outward objects, in which it yields to these phantaftic impressions.

You see then a wonderful improvement in this addition to the original thought. And the notion of *dreams waving at the wings of sleep* is, by the way, further justified by what Virgil feigns of their *sticking* or rather fluttering on the leaves of his magic tree in the infernal regions. But it is curious to observe how this improvement itself arose from hints suggested by his original. From Johnson's dream, *falling, like sleep upon their eyes*, Milton took his *feather'd sleep*, which he impersonates so properly; And from *Phant'sy's spreading her purple wings*, a circumstance, not so immediately connected with Johnson's design of *creating of airy forms a stream*, he catched the idea of *Sleep spreading her wings*, and to good purpose, since the airy stream of forms was to *wave at them*.

However, Johnson's image, is, in itself incomparable. It is taken from a *winged insect* breaking out of it's *Aurelia state*, it's *cave of cloud*, as it is finely called: Not unlike that of Mr. Pope,

So spins the Silk-worm small it's slender store,
And labours till it *clouds* itself all o'er.

IV. Dunc. ¶. 253.

And nothing can be juster than this allusion. For the antients always pictured FANCY and HUMAN LOVE with Insect's wings.

XIV. Thus then, whether the poet *prevaricates*, *enlarges*, or *adds*, still we frequently find some latent circumstance, attending his management, that convicts him of Imitation. Nay, he is not safe even when he denies himself these liberties; I mean when he only *glances* at his original. “ For, in this case, “ the borrowed sentiment usually wants something of “ that perspicuity which always attends the first deli- “ very of it.” This Rule may be considered as the Reverse of the *last*. A writer, sometimes takes a pleasure to *refine* on a plain thought: Sometimes (and that is usually when the original sentiment is well known and fully developed) he does not so much as attempt to open and *explain* it.

A poet of the last age has the following lines, on the subject of *Religion*.

Religion now is a young Mistress here,
For which each man will fight, and dye at least;
Let it alone awhile, and 'twill become
A kind of married wife; people will be
Content to live with it in quietness.

SUCKLING says this in his Tragedy of Brennoralt; which is a Satir throughout on the rising troubles of that time. BUTLER has taken the thought and applied it on the same occasion.

When

When hard words, jealousies, and fears
Set folks together by the ears,
And made them fight, like mad or drunk,
For dame Religion, as for Punk.

Setting aside the difference between the burlesque and serious style, one easily sees that this sentiment is borrowed from Suckling. It has not the clear and full exposition of an original thought. Butler, only represents men as drunk with Religion and fighting for it as for a Punk. The *other* gives the reason of the Debauch, namely, *fondness for a new face*; and tells us, besides, how things would subside into peace or indifference on a nearer and more familiar acquaintance. One could expect no less from the *Inventor* of this humorous thought; a *Borrower* might be content to allude to it.

XV. This last consideration puts me in mind of another artifice to conceal a borrowed sentiment. Nothing lies more open to discovery than a Simile in form, especially if it be a remarkable one. These are a sort of *purpurei panni* which catch all eyes; and, if the comparison be not a writer's own, he is almost sure to be detected. The way then that refined Imitators take to conceal themselves, in such a case, is to run the Similitude into Allegory. We have a curious instance in Mr. Pope, who has succeeded so well in the attempt, that his plagiarism, I believe, has never been suspected.

The verses, I have in my eye, are these fine ones, addressed to Lord Bolingbroke,

Oh, while along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all it's fame,
Say, shall my little Bark attendant fail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the Gale?

What think you, now, of these admired verses? Are they, besides their other beauties, perfectly original? You will be able to resolve this question, by turning to the following passage in a Poet, Mr. Pope was once fond of, I mean **STATIUS**.

Sic ubi magna novum Phario de litore puppis
Solvit iter, jamque innumeros utrinque rudentes,
Lataque veliferi porrexit brachia mali
Invasitque vias, in eodem angusta phaselus
Æquore, et immensi partem sibi vendicat Austris.

SILV. L. v. 1. ¶ 242.

But, especially, this other,

— immensæ veluti **CONNEXA** carinæ
CYMBÆ MINOR, cum sœvit hyems, pro parte,
furentes
Parva receptat aquas, et **EODEM VOLVITUR**
AUSTRO.

SILV. L. i. iv. ¶ 120.

XVI. I release You from this head of *Sentiments* with observing that we sometimes conclude a writer to have had a celebrated original in his eye, when
“ with-

“ without copying the peculiar thought, or stroke
“ of imagery, he gives us only a copy of the impres-
“ sion, it had made upon him.”

1. In delivering this rule I will not dissemble that I myself am copying, or rather stealing from a great critic: From *one*, however, who will not resent this theft; as indeed he has no reason, for he is so prodigiously rich in these things; as in others of more value, that what he neglects or flings away, would make the fortune of an ordinary writer. The person I mean is the late Editor of Shakespear who, in an admirable note on Julius Cæsar, taking occasion to quote that passage of Cato,

O think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots, and their last fatal periods,
Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all; and big with death,

observes “ that Mr. Addison was so struck and affected with the terrible graces of Shakespear (in the passage he is there considering) that instead of imitating his author's sentiments, he hath, before he was aware, given us only the copy of his own impressions made by them. For,

Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death,

“ are but the affections raised by such forcible images
“ as these,

— And

ON THE MARKS

All the Int'rim is
 Like a Phantasma, or a hideous dream
 The state of man,
 Like to a little Kingdom, suffers then
 The nature of an Insurrection."

The observation is new and finely applied. Give me leave to suppose that the following is an instance of the same nature.

2, Milton on a certain occasion says of *Death*, that he

" Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile —

P. L. B. 11. v. 846.

This representation is suppos'd by his learned Editor to be taken from Homer, from Statius, or from the Italian poets. A certain friend of ours, not to be nam'd without honour, and therefore not at all, on so slight an occasion, suggests that it might probably be copied from Spenser's,

Grinning griesly —

B. 5. C. 12.

And there is the more likelihood in this conjecture, as the poet a little before had call'd *death* — *the griesly terror* — *v. 704.* But after all, if he had any preceding writer in view, I suspect it might be **FLETCHER**; who, in his *Wife for a Month*, has these remarkable lines,

The game of Death was never play'd more nobly,
The meagre thief grew *wanton* in his mischiefs,
And his *shrunk hollow eyes* smil'd on his ruin.

The word *Ghastly*, I would observe, gives the precise idea of *shrunk hollow eyes*, and looks as if Milton, in admiration of his original, had only look'd out for an *epithet* to Death's smile, as he found it pictured in Fletcher.

THUS MUCH, then, may perhaps serve for an illustration of the first part of this Inquiry. We have found out several *marks* and applied them to various passages in the best writers, from which we may reasonably enough be allowed to infer an Imitation in point of *Sentiment*. For what respects the other part of *Expression*, this is an easier task, and will be dispatch'd in few words.

Only you will indulge me in an obvſervation or two to prevent Your expecting from me more than I undertake to perform.

When I speak of *Expression* then I mean to confine myself “ to single words or sentences, or at most “ the structure of a passage.” When *Imitation* is carried so far as to affect the general cast of language, or what we call a *Style*, no great sagacity is, perhaps, required to detect it. Thus the *Ciceroniani*, if they were not ambitious of proclaiming themselves, are discoverable at the first glance. And the later Roman poets, as well as the modern Latin versifiers, are to the best of their power, *Virgilian*. The thing is perhaps

haps still easier in a living language; especially if that language be our own. Milton and Pope, if they have made but few poets, have made many imitators; so many, that we are ready to complain there is hardly an original poet left.

Another point seems of no importance in the present inquiry. I know, it is asked, How far a writer casually or designedly imitates; that is, whether he copies another from memory only, without recollecting, at the time, the passage from which his expression is drawn, or purposely, and with full knowledge of his original. And this consideration is of much weight, as I have shewn at large, where the question is concerning the *credit* of the supposed imitator. For this is affected by nothing but direct and *intended* imitation. But as we are looking at present only for those marks in the expression which shew it *not* to be original, it is enough that the resemblance is such as cannot well be accounted for but on the supposition of some sort of commerce; whether immediately perceived by the writer himself, is not material. 'Tis true, this observation is applicable to *sentiments* as well as expression, And I have not pretended to give the preceding articles, as proofs or even presumptions, in all cases, that the later writer copied intentionally from a former. But there is this difference in the two cases. *Sentiments* may be strikingly similar, or even identical, without the least thought, or even effect of a preceding original. But the identity of *expression*, except in some few cases of no importance, is

is, in the same language, where the writer speaks entirely from himself, an almost impossible thing. And you will be of this mind, if you reflect on the infinitely varied lights in which the same image or sentiment presents itself to different writers ; the infinitely varied purpose they have to serve by it ; or where it happens to strike precisely in the same manner, and is directed precisely to the same end, the infinite combinations of words in which it may be expressed. To all which you may add, that the least imaginable variations either in the terms, or the structure of them, not only destroys the identity, but often disfigures the resemblance to that degree that we hardly know it to be a resemblance.

So that you see, the *marks* of imitated or, if you will, *derived expression* are much less equivocal, than of *sentiment*. We may pronounce of the *former* without hesitation, that it is taken, when corresponding marks in the *latter* would only authorize us to conclude that it was the *same* or perhaps *similar*.

I need not use more words to convince you, that the distinction of *casual* and *design'd* imitation is still of less significance in this class of imitations, than the other.

And with this preamble, more particular perhaps and circumstantial than was necessary, I now proceed to lay before you some of those *signs* of derived expression, which I conceive to be *unequivocal*. If they are so, they will generally appear at first sight ; so that I shall have little occasion to trouble you, as I did

did before, with my comments. It will be sufficient to deliver the *rule*, and to *exemplify* it.

I. An identity of expression, especially if carried on through an entire sentence, is the most certain proof of imitation.

Mr. Waller of Sacharissa,

So little care of what is done below

Hath the bright dame, whom heav'n affecteth so,
Paints her, 'tis true, with the same hand which
spreads

Like glorious colours thro' the flow'ry meads;

When lavish nature with her best attire

Cloaths the gay spring, the season of desire.

Mr. Fenton takes notice that the poet is copying from the *Muiopotmos* of Spenser,

To the gay gardens his unstaid desire

Him wholly carried to refresh his sprights,

There lavish Nature in her best attire

Pours forth sweet odours and alluring sights.

We shall see presently, that besides the identity of expression, there is also another mark of imitation in this passage.

II. But less than this will do, where the similarity of thought, and application of it, is striking.

Mr. Pope says divinely well,

Shall

Shall burning *Ætna*, if a sage requires,
 Forget to thunder and recall its fires?
 On air or sea *new motions be impress'd*,
 Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?
 When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
 Shall *gravitation cease if you go by?*
 Or some old temple nodding to its fall
 For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?

Essay IV. ¶ 123.

Now turn to Mr. Wollaston, an easy natural writer (where his natural manner is not stiffened by a mathematical pedantry) and abounding in fine fallies of the imagination; and see if the poet did not catch his *expression*, as well as the fire of his conception in this place, from the philosopher.

“ As to the course of Nature, if a good man be passing by an infirm building, just in the article of falling, can it be expected that God should *suspend the force of gravitation till he is gone by*, in order to his deliverance; or can we think it would be increased, and the fall hastened, if a bad man was there, only that he might be caught, crushed, and made an example? If a man's safety or prosperity should depend upon winds or rains, must *new motions be impressed upon the atmosphere*, and new directions given to the floating parts of it, by some extraordinary and new influence from God?”

III. Some-

III. Sometimes the original expression is not taken but paraphrased ; and the writer disguises himself in a kind of circumlocution. Yet this artifice does not conceal him, especially if some fragments, as it were, of the inventor's phrase are found dispersedly in the imitation.

For in the secret of her troubled thought

A doubtful combat love and honour fought.

Fairfax's Tasso. B.IV. S.70.

Hence Mr. Waller,

There public care and private passion fought

A doubtful combat in his noble thought.

Poems p. 14.

Public care is the periphrasis of honour, and private passion, of love. For the rest you see — *disjecti membra poetæ.*

IV. An imitation is discoverable, when there is but the least particle of the original expression, " by a peculiar and no very natural arrangement of words."

In Fletcher's *faithful Shepherdess* the speaker says,

— — — — — In thy face

Shines more awful majesty,

Than dull weak mortality

Dare with misty eyes behold,

AND LIVE —

The

The writer glanc'd, but very improperly on such an occasion, at *Deut.* iv. 33. "Did ever people hear "the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the "fire, as thou hast heard, *and live?*"

V. An uncommon *construction* of words not identical; especially if the subject be the same, or the ideas similar, will look like imitation.

Milton says finely of the *Swan*,

— — — — — The Swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly rows
HER STATE —

I should think he might probably have that line of Fletcher in his head,

How like a Swan she swims HER PACE !

The expression, you see, is very like. 'Tis true the *image* in Milton is much nobler. It is taken from a barge of state in a public procession.

VI. We may even pronounce that a *single word* is taken, when it is new and uncommon.

Milton's calling a ray of light — a levell'd *rule* in *Comus* ¶ 340, is so particular that, when one reads in Euripides, ηλίς ΚΑΝΩΝ σαφῆς, *Suppl.* ¶ 650. one has no doubt that the learned poet translated the Greek word.

Again, Mr. Pope's,

E

" Or

“ Or ravish’d with the *whistling* of a name.

is for the same reason, if there were no other points of likeness, copied from Mr. Cowley’s

“ Charm’d with the foolish *whistlings* of a name.

Transl. of Virgil’s *O! fortunati nimium, &c.*

VII. An improper *use* of uncommon expression, in very exact writers, will sometimes create a suspicion. Milton had called the sight indifferently *visual nerve* and *visual ray*, P. L. 111. 620. xi. 415. Mr. Pope in his Messiah thought he might take the same liberty, but forgot that though the *visual nerve* might be purged from film, the *visual ray* could not. Had Mr. Pope *invented* this bold expression, he would have seen to apply his *metaphor* more properly.

VIII. Where the word or phrase is *foreign*, there is, if possible, still less doubt.

— — — — — at last his sail-broad *vans*
He spreads for flight. Milton P. L. 11. 927.

Most certainly from Tasso’s,

— Spiega al grand volo i *vanni*. ix.

And that of Johnson in his *Sejanus*,

O! what is it proud slime will not believe
Of his own worth, to hear it *equal prais’d*
Thus with the Gods —

A. 1.

from

from Juvenal's

— — — nihil est quod credere de se

Non possit, cum laudatur *Diis æqua potestas.*

IX. Conclude the same when the expression is *antique*, in the writer's own language.

In Mr. Waller's Panegyric on the Protector,

So, when a Lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And angry grows, if he *that first took pain*
To tame his youth, approach the haughty beast,
He bends to him, but frights away the rest.

The antique formality of the phrase *that first took pain*, for, *that first took the pains*, in so pure and modern a speaker, as this poet, looks suspicious. He took it, as he found it in an old writer. There are many other marks of imitation, but we had needed no more than this to make the discovery.

So when a lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And beats his tail, with courage proud, and wroth,
If his commander come, *who first took pain*
To tame his youth, his lofty crest down go'th.

Fairfax's *Tasso*, B. VIII. S. 83.

X. You observe in most of the instances, here given, besides other marks, there is an identity of rhyme. And this circumstance of itself, in our poetry, is no bad argument of imitation, particularly when

joined to a similarity of expression. And the reason is, the rhyme itself very naturally brings the expression along with it.

1. "Stuck o'er with titles, and hung round with strings,

That thou may'st be *by Kings, or whores of Kings.*"
Essay on man, E. IV ¶ 205.

from Mr. Cowley in his translation of *Hor. I. ep. 10.*

"To Kings, or to the favourites of Kings.

2. Such is the world's great harmony, that *springs*
From order, union, full *consent of things.*

Ep. III. 295.

from Denham's *Cowper's Hill.*

"Wisely she knew the *harmony of things*
As well as that of sounds from discord *springs.*"

3. "Far as the solar walk, or milky way.

Essay on man, Ep. I. ¶ 102.

from Mr. Dryden's Pindaric Poem to the memory of K. Charles II.

"Out of the solar walk, or heav'ns high way."

Though these consonancies chyming in the writer's head, he might not always be aware of the imitation.

XI. In the examples, just given, there was no reason to suspect the poet was imitating, till you met with the original. Then indeed the rhyme leads to the discovery. But “if an exact writer falls into a flatness of expression for the sake of rhyme, you may ev’n previously conclude that he has some precedent for it.”

In the famous lines

Let modest Foster, if he will, excell
Ten metropolitans *in preaching well.*

Ep. to Satires, ¶ 131.

I used to suspect that the phrase of *preaching well* so unlike the concise accuracy of Pope, would not have been hazarded by him, if some eminent writer, tho’ perhaps of an older age and less correct taste than his own, had not set the example. But I had no doubt left when I happened on the following couplet in Mr. Waller.

Your’s sounds aloud, and tells us you excell
No less in courage, than *in singing well.*

Poem to Sir W. D’Avenant.

Our great poet is more happy in the application of these rhymes on another occasion,

Let such teach others, who themselves excell,
And censure freely, who have written well.

Essay on Crit. ¶ 15.

The reason is apparent. But here he glanced at the Duke of Buckingham's,

“ Nature's chief master-piece is *writing well*.

XII. “ The same pause and turn of expression are pretty sure symptoms of imitation.” These minute resemblances do not usually spring from Nature, which, when the sentiment is the same, hath a hundred ways of its own, of giving it to us.

1. That noble verse in the essay on criticism, ¶ 625.

“ For fools rush in, where angels dare not tread,
is certainly fashion'd upon Shakespear's,

————— “ the world is grown so bad
“ That wrens make prey, where eagles dare not
perch. Rich. III. A. 1. S. III.

2. The verses to Sir W. Trumbal in Past. I.

“ And carrying with you all the world can boast,
To all the world illustriously are lost.”

from Waller's *Maid's Tragedy* alter'd,

Happy is he that from the world retires
And carries with him what the world admires.

p. 215. Lond. 1712.

XIII. When to these marks the same *Rhyme* is added, the case is still more evident.

“ Men

OF IMITATION.

71

“ Men would be angels, angels would be Gods.”

Essay on Man, Ep. i. ¶ 126.

Without all question from Sir Fulk Grevil,

Men would be tyrants, tyrants would be *Gods*.

Works, *Lond.* 1633. p. 73.

XIV. The seeming quaintness and obscurity of an expression frequently indicates imitation. As when in Fletcher's *Pilgrim* we read,

“ *Humming* of higher nature vex his brains.

A. II. S. 2.

Had the idea been original, the poet had expressed it more plainly. In leaving it thus, he pays his reader the complement to suppose, that he will readily call to mind,

— — — — aliena negotia centum

Per caput, et circa saliunt latus.

which sufficiently explains it: As we may see from Mr. Cowley's application of the same passage. “ *Aliena negotia centum per caput et circa saliunt latus.* A hundred businesses of other men fly continually about his head and *ears*, and strike him in the face like Dorres.” *Disc. of Liberty.*” And still more clearly, from Mr. Pope's,

A hundred other men's affairs,
Like bees, are *humming* in my ears.

Learned writers of quick parts abound in these delicate allusions. It makes a principal part of modern elegance to glance in this oblique manner at well known passages in the classics.

XV. I will trouble you with but one more note of *imitated expression*, and it shall be the very reverse of the last. When the passages glanced at are not familiar, the expression is frequently minute and circumstantial, corresponding to the original in the order, turn, and almost number of the words. The reasons are, that the imitated passage not being known, the imitator may give it, as he finds it, with safety, or at least without offence; and that, besides, the force and beauty of it would escape us in a brief and general allusion. The following are instances.

1. "Man never is, but always to be blest.

Essay on man, Ep. 1. 69.

from Manilius

Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.

2. — — — — — "Hope never comes,
That comes to all" —

Milton P. L. 1. y. 66.

from Euripides in the *Troad*. y. 676.

— ὃς, ὁ πάσι λέιπεταις Εροῦσις,
Σύνεστιν ἐλπίς. —

3. But

3. But above all, that in Johnson's Cataline

— — — — — He shall die:

Shall was too slowly said: He's *dying*: That
Is still too slow: He's *dead*.

from Seneca's *Hercules furens*, A. III.

Lycus Creonti debitas poenas *dabit*,
Lentum est, *dabit*: *dat*: hoc quoque est lentum, *dedit*.

You have now, Sir, before you a specimen of those rules, which I have fancied might be fairly applied to the discovery of imitations, both in regard to the SENSE and EXPRESSION of great writers. I would not pretend that the same stress is to be laid on *all*, but there may be something, at least, worth attending to in every one of them. It were easy, perhaps, to enumerate still more, and to illustrate these I have given with more agreeable citations. Yet I have spared you the disgust of considering those vulgar passages, which every body recollects and sets down for acknowledged imitations. And these I have used are taken from the most celebrated of the ancient and modern writers. You may observe indeed that I have chiefly drawn from our own poets; which I did, not merely because I know you despise the pedantry of confining one's self to learned quotations, but because I think we are better able to discern those circumstances, which betray an imitation, in our own language than in any other. Amongst other reasons, an identity of words and phrases, upon which so much

de-

depends, especially in the article of *expression*, is only to be had in the *same* language. And you are not to be told with how much more certainty we determine of the degree of evidence, which such identity affords for this purpose, in a language we speak, than in one which we only lisp or spell.

But You will best understand of what importance this affair of *expression* is to the discovery of imitations, by considering how seldom we are able to fix an imitation on Shakespear. The reason is, not, that there are not numberless passages in him very like to others in approved authors, or that he had not read enough to give us a fair hold of him; but that his *expression* is so totally his own, that he almost alway, sets us at defiance.

You will ask me, perhaps, now I am on this subject, how it happened that Shakespear's language is everywhere so much his own as to secure his imitations, if they were such, from discovery; when I pronounce with such assurance of those of our other poets. The answer is given for me in the Preface to Mr. Theobald's Shakespear; though the observation, I think, is too good to come from that critic. It is, that, though his words, agreeably to the state of the English tongue at that time, be generally Latin, his phraseology is perfectly English: An advantage, he owed to his slender acquaintance with the Latin idiom. Whereas the other writers of his age, and such others of an older date as were likely to fall into his hands, had not only the most familiar acquaintance

tance with the Latin idiom, but affected on all occasions to make use of it. Hence it comes to pass, that, though he might draw sometimes from the Latin (Ben Johnson, you know, tells us, *He had less Greek*) and the learned English writers, he takes nothing but the *sentiment*; the expression comes of itself, and is purely English.

I might indulge in other reflections, and detain you still further with examples taken from his works. But we have *lain*, as the Poet speaks, *on these primrose beds*, too long. It is time that you now rise to your own nobler *inventions*; and that I return myself to those, less pleasing, perhaps, but more useful studies from which your friendly solicitations have called me. Such as these amusements are, however, I cannot repent me of them, since they have been innocent at least, and even ingenuous; and, what I am fondest to recollect, have helped to enliven those many years of friendship we have pass'd together in this place. I see indeed, with regret, the approach of that time, which threatens to take me both from *it*, and *you*. But however fortune may dispose of me, she cannot throw me to a distance, to which your affection and good wishes, at least, will not follow me.

And for the rest,

“ Be no unpleasing melancholly mine,

The coming years of my life will not, I foresee, in many respects be what the past have been to me. But, till they take me from myself, I must always bear about me the agreeable remembrance of our friendship.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate

Friend and Servant.

C A M B.
15 Aug. 1757.



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